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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9892
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AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: HOW MUNICH ELECTS ITS LORD MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

1. INTRODUCTION. BAVARIAN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON MARCH 5. THE RACES FOR LORD MAYOR OF MUNICH AND THE 80-SEAT MUNICH CITY COUNCIL COULD WELL HAVE CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPACT OUTSIDE BAVARIA. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO EXPLAIN THE MECHANISMS BY WHICH MUNICH ELECTS ITS LORD MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL. END INTRODUCTION.

2. LORD MAYOR ELECTIONS. THERE ARE ELEVEN CANDIDATES FOR LORD MAYOR IN THE MARCH 5 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN MUNICH. THEY INCLUDE CANDIDATES OF THE MAJOR PARTIES -- SPD, CSU AND FDP -- AS WELL AS CANDIDATES FROM SPECIAL GROUPS SUCH AS THE CITY HALL SOCIAL BLOCK (SOZIALER RATHAUSBLOCK) AND THE MUNICH BLOCK. (N.B. IN THE 1972 LORD
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MAYOR ELECTION, THE CANDIDATES OF THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES WON A TOTAL OF ALMOST 97 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.)

THE WINNER OF THE LORD MAYOR RACE MUST OBTAIN A MINIMUM OF ONE HALF OF THE VOTES CAST PLUS ONE. IN THE EVENT NO REPEAT NOT CANDIDATE RECEIVES AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE MARCH 5 VOTING, BAVARIAN ELECTION LAW PROVIDES

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FOR A RUNOFF ELECTION BETWEEN THE TWO CANDIDATES WITH THE LARGEST VOTE TOTALS. THE CANDIDATE WHO RECEIVES THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF THE VALID VOTES CAST IN THIS RUNOFF IS ELECTED LORD MAYOR.

3. CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS. UNDER BAVARIAN MUNICIPAL ELECTION LAW, MUNICH, AS A CITY WITH MORE THAN ONE MILLION INHABITANTS, HAS AN 80-SEAT CITY COUNCIL. THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION LAW PROVIDES THAT EACH MUNICH VOTER SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO CAST A TOTAL OF 80 VOTES FO CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES. EACH INDIVIDUAL VOTER MAY CAST HIS VOTES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS: (A) HE OR SHE MAY VOTE A STRAIGHT SPD, CSU OR FDP TICKET BY CHECKING THE APPROPRIATE BOX ON THE BALLOT (N.B. THE LARGE PARTIES FIELD FULL 80-PERSON CANDIDATE LISTS, BUT SMALL ELECTORAL GROUPS OFTEN PRESENT ONLY 30 OR 40 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES.); (B) HE MAY CAST ONE VOTE EACH FOR ANY 80 INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES WHOSE NAMES APPEAR ANYWHERE ON THE BALLOT; OR (C) HE MAY CAST UP TO THREE VOTES FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE AND DISTRIBUTE THESE WEIGHTED VOTES AMONG ANY COMBINATION OF CANDIDATES SO LONG AS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF HIS VOTES DOES NOT EXCEED 80. ANY BALLOT CONTAINING MORE THAN 80 VOTES IS AUTOMATICALLY INVALID. A MUNICH VOTER MAY, FOR EXAMPLE, GIVE 20 CANDIDATES THREE VOTES EACH, FIVE CANDIDATES TWO VOTES EACH AND 10 CANDIDATES ONE VOTE EACH.
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4. ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST SIZEABLE NUMBERS OF MUNICH VOTERS HAVE UTILIZED THEIR RIGHT TO CAST WEIGHTED VOTES FOR CITY COUNCIL, SURPRISINGLY FEW BALLOTS HAVE BEEN INVALIDATED BECAUSE THEY CONTAINED MORE THAN 80 VOTES.

5. THE INTRICACY OF THE CITY COUNCIL BALLOT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO TABULATE THE VOTING RESULTS QUICKLY. ALTHOUGH TRENDS IN CITY COUNCIL VOTING MAY BE APPARENT ON MARCH 6, THE DAY AFTER THE ELECTION, FINAL OFFICIAL RESULTS MAY WELL BE ANNOUNCED ONLY FOUR TO SEVEN DAYS AFTER THE ELECTION. BETTS

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